

## Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CCO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 R

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DRAFTED BY S/S-O: LMATTESON

APPROVED BY S/S-O: LIS MATTESON

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 058858

EXDIS TOSEC 576

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION DEPT AND SECDEF FROM OSLO 14 MAR.

QUOTE: S E C R E T OSLO 1041

EXDIS

FOR SECRETARY KISSINGER AND SECRETARY SCHLESINGER

SECDEF HANDLE AS SPECAT EXLUSIVE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: BEXP, MASS, NO, NATO

SUBJECT: AIRCRAFT REPLACEMENT ISSUE

REFS: (A) OSLO 954 (B) OSLO 911

SUMMARY: IN IMPORTANT CHANGE OF POLICY, NORWEGIAN  
GOVERNMENT NOW APPEARS PREPARED TO ANNOUNCE DECISION  
TO ACQUIRE F-16 AND JOIN FOUR-NATION CONSORTIUM.  
HOWEVER DETAILS RE TERMS OF NORWEGIAN PARTICIPATION IN  
CONSORTIUM COULD STILL POSE PROBLEMS. FOSTERVOLL  
WILL VISIT COPENHAGEN AND THE HAGUE THIS WEEKEND TO  
COORDINATE STRATEGY FOR MARCH 24 MEETING. MY CALL  
ON PARLIAMENTARY LABOR PARTY LEADER ODVAR NORDLI PROVED  
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HIGHLY EFFECTIVE. END SUMMARY

1. DEFENSE MINISTER FOSTERVOLI INFORMED ME THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS AGREED TO PROCEED WITH THE AIRCRAFT REPLACEMENT ISSUE ON THE BASIS OF THE DRAFT MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) BETWEEN THE US AND THE FOUR CONSORTIUM PARTNERS. IN A SERIES OF DISCUSSIONS THIS WEEK, FOSTERVOLL, FOREIGN MINISTER FRYDENLUND, PRIME MINISTER BRATTELI, PARLIAMENTARY LEADER OF THE LABOR PARTY ODVAR NORDLI AND DEFENSE COMMISSION SECRETARIAT CHIEF ERIC HIMLE HAVE APPARENTLY ADOPTED A STRATEGY DESIGNED TO SURMOUNT DOMESTIC POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES OVER THE ROLE OF THE DEFENSE COMMISSION AND TO SATISFY BOTH US AND CONSORTIUM REQUIREMENTS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE MOU. WHILE FOSTERVOLL INDICATED A "SPECIAL AGREEMENT" MAY BE REQUIRED, IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT ANY PROPOSALS WILL BE MADE WITHIN THE MOU CONTEXT. THIS REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT TURN AROUND IN THE NORWEGIAN POSITION. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NOT HEARD THE LAST OF NORWAY'S PROBLEMS RE TERMS OF PARTICIPATION IN THE FOUR-NATION CONSORTIUM, I AM CONSIDERABLY ENCOURAGED OVER THE LIMMINENT PROSPECT OF NORWAY OPTING FOR ACQUISITION OF THE F-16 WITH THE FOUR NATION CONSORTIUM.

2. FOSTERVOLL RECOGNIZES THE NECESSITY OF COMBINING A DOMESTIC POLITICAL SOLUTION WITH SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATIONS VIS A VIS CONSORTIUM PARTNERS AND THE US. ACCORDINGLY, FOSTERVOLL PLANS TO VISIT HIS DANISH COUNTERPART IN COPENHAGEN ON SATURDAY, MARCH 15, MOVING ON TO SEE DEFENSE MINISTER VREDELING IN THE HAGUE THE FOLLOWING DAY FOR THE PURPOSE OF COORDINATING A STRATEGY FOR THE MARCH 24 MEETING OF MOD'S. FOSTERVOLL'S AIM IS TO RUN A MEETING WHICH WOULD FACILITATE A BELGIAN DECISION TO JOIN THE F-16 CONSORTIUM, ALTHOUGH BRUSSELS IS NOT ON THE MINISTER'S ITINERARY. (KNOWLEDGEABLE NORWEGIANS ARE DISCOURAGED AT PRESENT BELGIAN POSTURE ON AIRCRAFT ISSUE.) CABINET ALSO HOPED FOSTERVOLL COULD HAVE STOPPED IN WASHINGTON AS WELL BUT TIME CONSTRAINTS PRECLUDED A TRANS-ATLANTIC TRIP.

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3. FULL CABINET ENDORSEMENT FOR THE NORWEGIAN DECISION TO GEAR ITS POLICIES TO THE MOU HAS NOT YET OCCURRED TO OUR KNOWLEDGE ALTHOUGH WITH BRATTELI, FRYDENLUND, FOSTERVOLL, NORDLI AND HIMLE IN AGREEMENT, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT ANYONE ELSE IN THE CABINET IS KNOWLEDGEABLE OR FORCEFUL ENOUGH TO SUCCESSFULLY OPPOSE THIS COURSE OF ACTION. FOSTERVOLL HIMSELF HAS BEEN ACTIVE BEHIND THE SCENES IN RALLYING SUPPORT AMONG PRO-DEFENSE, NON-SOCIALIST

OPPOSITION ELEMENTS. THIS WILL STAND FOSTER-  
VOLL IN GOOD STEAD EARLY NEXT WEEK WHEN HE INTENDS TO  
CONSULT AND OBTAIN THE SUPPORT OF THOSE PARLIAMENTARY  
COMMITTEES NORMALLY INVOLVED IN MAJOR SECURITY ISSUES.

4. EARLIER THIS WEEK, I MET WITH LABOR PARTY'S PAR-  
LIAMENTARY LEADER ODVAR NORDLI, WHO IS ALSO CHAIRMAN OF THE DEFENSE  
COMMISSION AND FRONT RUNNER TO SUCCEED BRATTELI AS  
PRIME MINISTER (SEE REFTELS). NORDLI WAS UNDERSTANDABLY  
CONCERNED ABOUT THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DEFENSE  
COMMISSION TO CONSIDER OVERALL, LONG RANGE DEFENSE BUDGET  
PRIORITIES WHERE SHIPS, SHORAD'S, AND OTHER IMPORTANT  
AREAS MUST BE CONSIDERED IN ADDITION TO REPLACEMENT  
AIRCRAFT. I PRESENTED MY CASE TO NORDLI STRESSING  
ECONOMIC BENEFITS NORWAY WOULD LOSE, UNDESIRABLE NATO  
AND DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES AND THE TEXT OF  
THE MOU ITSELF WHICH, WITH ITS BROAD TERMINATION  
CLAUSES, DOES NOT PREEMPT THE DEFENSE COMMISSION'S  
ROLE. AS IN MY EARLIER DEMARCHES, I AM PLEASED TO  
REPORT THAT MY SESSION WITH NORDLI HAD A DECIDEDLY  
POSITIVE IMPACT, INCREASED HIS UNDERSTANDING OF THE  
PROBLEM AND PLACED THE VIEWS OF THE US GOVERNMENT IN  
USEFUL PERSPECTIVE.

5. IN SUM, MY EARLIER PESSIMISM OVER WHAT APPEARED TO  
BE AN IMMINENT COLLAPSE OF NORWAY ON THE AIRCRAFT  
ISSUE HAS DISAPPEARED. BARRING UNFORESEEABLE CATASTROPHE,  
IT WOULD NOW APPEAR THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED  
TO GOING INTO THE FOUR-NATION CONSORTIUM ON THE BASIS  
OF THE MOU AND, ALTHOUGH SERIOUS PROBLEM AREAS REMAIN,  
AND UNDESIRABLE TREND HAS BEEN EFFECTIVELY REVERSED.  
BYRNE  
UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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## Message Attributes

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